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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 NEA-11 ISO-00 EURE-00 CIAE-00 PM-07 INR-10

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USIA-15 SAM-01 EB-11 ACDA-19 MC-02 SAJ-01 OMB-01

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FM AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2920

INFO USMISSION NATO

AMEMBASSY ANKARA

AMEMBASSY ATHENS

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS UNN

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

AMEMBASSY ROME

SECDEF WASHDC

DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN

TREASURY DEPT WASHDC

CINCUSAFE

USNMR SHAPE

C O N F I D E N T I A L THE HAGUE 689

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, BEXP, MILI, NATO

SUBJECT: REPLACEMENT AIRCRAFT FOR F-104

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REF: (A) USNATO 454, (B) STATE 23571 (C) USNATO 403

SUMMARY: CONVERGENCE OF DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL EVENTS PRESENTLY FAVOR DUTCH SELECTION OF AMERICAN PLANE TO REPLACE F-104S. WE RECOMMEND THAT THE GON BE ENCOURAGED TO TAKE THE LEAD IN ESTABLISHING A CONSORTIUM OF SMALLER NATIONS TO PURCHASE AN AMERICAN PRODUCT BY OPTING FOR THE COBRA. WE FURTHER RECOMMEND THAT SO LONG AS THIS FAVORABLE SITUATION OBTAINS THE US NOT RPT NOT UNDERTAKE ANY INITIATIVES WHICH WOULD LEAD DUTCH TO DELAY THEIR DECISION. END SUMMARY.

1. EMBASSY AGREES WITH EXCELLENT ANALYSIS OF REPLACEMENT FIGHTER QUESTION CONTAINED REFTEL (A). WE OFFER THE FOLLOWING SUPPLEMENTARY COMMENTS.

2. AIRCRAFT IN COMPETITION SHOULD BE JUDGED ON THEIR OVERALL MERITS, PROJECTED LIFE-CYCLE OPERATIONAL CAPABILITIES, AND ABILITY TO SATISFY BOTH NEAR AND LONG TERM NATO ROLES. IN ADDITION, MILITARY STANDARDIZATION/COMMONALITY MUST BE OF HIGH PRIORITY TO ASSURE MAXIMUM ALLIANCE EFFECTIVENESS FOR DEFENSE DOLLARS SPENT. BECAUSE OF MORE MODERN TECHNOLOGY, AMERICAN AIRCRAFT IN THE COMPETITION ARE CLEARLY SUPERIOR TO EITHER THE SAAB VIGGEN OR THE DASSAULT MIRAGE SUPER F-1. THE AMERICAN AIRCRAFT ARE ALSO CLEARLY SUPERIOR TO THE SOVIET DESIGNED MIG 21-J AND AGAIN, BECAUSE OF THEIR LATEST TECHNOLOGY, INHERENT FLEXIBILITY AND GROWTH POTENTIAL, SHOULD BE ABLE TO SIGNIFICANTLY COUNTER ANY NEW AIRCRAFT THAT THE WARSAW PACT MAY INTRODUCE THROUGH THE 1980'S. SINCE NEITHER THE SUPPER F-1 NOR THE VIGGEN ENJOY THIS POSITION OF LATEST TECHNOLOGY, THE SAME DOES NOT APPLY TO THEM.

3. PROCESS OF AIRCRAFT SELECTION BY RNLAf IS SUMMARIZED HERE FOR THE RECORD. AFTER DUTCH OPTED OUT OF MRCA PROGRAM BECAUSE OF COSTS, THEY INFORMALLY EVALUTED SEVERAL AIRCRAFT OVER A PERIOD OF TWO YEARS. IN MARCH 1972, EMBASSY ARRANGED FOR DUTCH OFFICIALS TO VISIT PLANTS OF THREE AMERICAN AIRCRAFT COMPANIES WHO PRESENTED THEMSELVES AND THEIR PRODUCT TO RNLAf. THESE COMPANIES AND AIRCRAFT WERE: MCDONNELL DOUGLAS F4-E WITH LEADING EDGE SLATS, NORTHROP AIRCRAFT'S P-530 COBRA AND LOCKHEED AIRCRAFT'S LANCER CL-1200.

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4. IN JULY 1972 DUTCH DEFENSE MINISTRY ISSUED REQUESTS FOR PROPOSALS TO DASSAULT, SAAB AND NORTHROP. PRIOR TO THIS ACTION BY THE DUTCH, AMBASSADOR AND MAAG HAD REPEATEDLY ASKED DUTCH TO INCLUDE ALL THREE AMERICAN COMPETITORS IN THEIR ISSUANCE OF CALLS FOR BIDS BUT TO NO AVAIL. BIDS WERE SUBMITTED BY THE THREE COMPETITNG COMPANIES ON 2 OCTOBER 1972 AND HAVE BEEN PERIODICALLY UPDATED. RNLAf'S OFFICIAL POSITION IS THAT ONLY THE THREE COMPANIES THAT WERE ASKED TO SUBMIT BIDS ARE IN THE COMPETITION.

ALTHOUGH WILLING TO SEE REPRESENTATIVES OF OTHER AMERICAN COMPETITORS, THEIR CURRENT POSITION IS THAT THEY DO NOT INTEND TO EXPAND THE COMPETITION. WHILE MOD STATE SECRETARY STEMERDINK (WHO MAKES NO BONES ABOUT HIS PREFERENCE FOR AN AMERICAN PLANE) CONTINUES TO EXPRESS INTEREST IN THE LANCER IF THE ITALIANS MOVE SERIOUSLY TOWARD A COMMITMENT. FOR PRACTICAL PURPOSES THE NORTHROP P-530 COBRA IS THE ONLY AMERICAN COMPETITOR WHICH HAS A CHANCE OF BEING SELECTED BY THE DUTCH IN THE NEAR FUTURE. (IN THIS CONNECTION GENERAL STOKLA, RNLAFC CHIEF OF MATERIEL, TOLD THE AMBASSADOR THAT BOTH HE AND MOD VREDELING HAD VERY GOOD MEETINGS ON FEB 5 WITH NORTHROP'S PRESIDENT TOM JONES.)

5. ALL THREE AIRCRAFT IN COMPETITION IN THE NETHERLANDS REQUIRE SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENT TO BE OPERATIONAL. THE SUPER F-1 REQUIRES QUALIFYING AND INTEGRATION OF THE SNECA M-53 ENGINE. THE VIGGEN REQUIRES INTEGRATION OF AN AIR-TO-AIR WEAPONS SYSTEM, WHICH INCLUDES INSTALLATION OF AN INTERNALLY MOUNTED GUN. THE MAJOR CONCERN OF THE RNLAFC FOR THE COBRA PROGRAM APPEARS TO BE WITH THE J-101 ENGINE, PRIMARILY ONE OF HIGH DEVELOPMENT COSTS. ANY ADDITIONAL FUNDING TO FURTHER DEVELOP OR FULLY QUALIFY THE J-101 ENGINE WOULD GIVE THE COBRA A SIGNIFICANT BOOST OVER ITS TWO EUROPEAN COMPETITORS.

6. AT MOMENT, COBRA APPEARS TO HAVE INSIDE TRACK HERE AMONG THREE CANDIDATES. THE POSSIBILITY OF A DUTCH BUY OF THE VIGGEN IS REMOTE SINCE SWEDEN IS NOT ONLY A NON-NATO COUNTRY, BUT ALSO EASILY SUBJECT TO RUSSIAN PRESSURE DUE TO ITS GEOGRAPHIC PROXIMITY TO THE SOVIET UNION. THESE FACTORS MAKE QUESTIONABLE DELIVERY OF SWEDISH AIRCRAFT AND LOGISTICS SUPPLY IN TIME OF TENSION OR AFTER OUTBREAK OF HOSTILITIES. WHILE GON HAS INDICATED INTEREST IN USING SUPER F-1 AS GESTURE TOWARD FRANCE AND EUROPEANISM, RECENT FRENCH DISPLAYS OF GO-IT-ALONE PHILOSOPHY MAY HAVE DIMINISHED GON'S INTEREST IN BEING ACCOMMODATING. FURTHERMORE, THERE ARE CONFIDENTIAL

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REPORTS THAT FRENCH HARD-SELL TACTICS HAVE BEGUN TO IRRITATE THE DUTCH.

7. BURDEN-SHARING IS OBVIOUSLY ANOTHER FACTOR THEORETICALLY FAVORING THE COBRA BUT THE GON HAS NOT SO FAR GIVEN BURDEN SHARING SERIOUS ATTENTION IN THIS CONTEXT. TO THE EXTENT THAT WASHINGTON AND NATO KEEP THE HEAT ON BURDEN-SHARING THE GON WILL TEND TO FOCUS ON THE PROBLEM WHICH SHOULD ADD ANOTHER ELEMENT IN FAVOR OF AN AMERICAN SELECTION.

8. AN ADDITIONAL FAVORABLE FACTOR HAS BEEN THE RECENT FALL OF THE BELGIAN GOVT WHICH HAS APPARENTLY POSTPONED A BELGIAN DECISION ON REPLACEMENT. SINCE GON WOULD LIKE TO COORDINATE THE DUTCH PROGRAM WITH THAT OF BELGIAN (IF AT ALL POSSIBLE) AND SINCE BELGIUM HAD PREVIOUSLY EXPRESSED GREAT INTEREST IN THE SUPER F-1, THE

BELGIAN POSTPONEMENT HAS REDUCED SOME INDIRECT PRESSURE ON THE DUTCH TO FAVOR THE MIRAGE.

9. FROM THESE DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL PIECES WE JUDGE THERE IS PRESENTLY DEVELOPING A CONVERGENCE OF CIRCUMSTANCES FAVORABLE TO THE DUTCH SELECTION OF THE COBRA. WE SENSE THE GON IS IN FACT CONSIDERING A COMMITMENT (AS WE ARE QUIETLY URGING) FOR THE COBRA CONDITIONED UPON BELGIUM AND PERHAPS NORWAY OR DENMARK SUBSEQUENTLY JOINING WITH THEM AND PROBABLY ALSO CONDITIONED ON QUALIFICATION OF THE J-101 ENGINE. WE HAVE NO RPT NO INDICATION OF ANY DUTCH INTEREST IN DEFERRING F-104 G REPLACEMENT SELECTION TO AWAIT US EVALUATION OF YF-16 AND YF-17 TECHNOLOGY PROGRAMS MORE THAN A YEAR HENCE (REFTEL B). AS USNATO HAS SUGGESTED, THERE ARE POTENTIAL ADVANTAGES IN TERMS OF COMMONALITY TO COMMITTING US DEVELOPMENTAL FUNDS TO A LIGHTWEIGHT FIGHTER PROGRAM (REFTEL (C)). HOWEVER, THIS COURSE OF ACTION COULD DELAY DUTCH DECISION FOR AT LEAST ONE YEAR, AND IT IS UNCLEAR WHETHER SUCH A DELAY WOULD BE MORE FAVORABLE FOR THE AMERICAN OR FRENCH PROPOSALS.

10. WE RECOMMEND, THEREFORE, THAT SO LONG AS THIS FAVORABLE SITUATION OBTAINS NO ACTION BE TAKEN TOWARD US DEVELOPMENT FUNDS FOR A LIGHTWEIGHT FIGHTER PROGRAM. WE DO RECOMMEND THAT THE FIRE BE KEPT UNDER THE BURDEN-SHARING BURNER. AND WE DO RECOMMEND THAT THE GON BE ENCOURAGED TO TAKE THE LEAD IN ESTABLISHING A CONSORTIUM OF SMALL NATIONS TO PURCHASE AN AMERICAN PRODUCT BY EARLY OPTING FOR THE COBRA.

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